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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
15 April 1972

## INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam  
(As of 1500 EST)

1. The government is still holding An Loc although heavy fighting continues there. Communist forces have sharply stepped up attacks along the northern and central coasts. Local Viet Cong forces are beginning to play a more important role in the offensive, and the number of enemy initiated attacks reported throughout South Vietnam is reaching levels higher than any since 1968.

2. South Vietnamese defenders inside An Loc are still holding off enemy ground and armor assaults backed by heavy artillery attacks. Reinforcements airlifted into the provincial capital, have provided the additional help needed to keep the capital from falling, although the fresh troops reportedly are suffering heavy casualties. The armored relief column remains south of the city; press reports claim that some troops in the column broke and ran under Communist fire on 15 April and are now regrouping near the district capital of Chon Thanh.

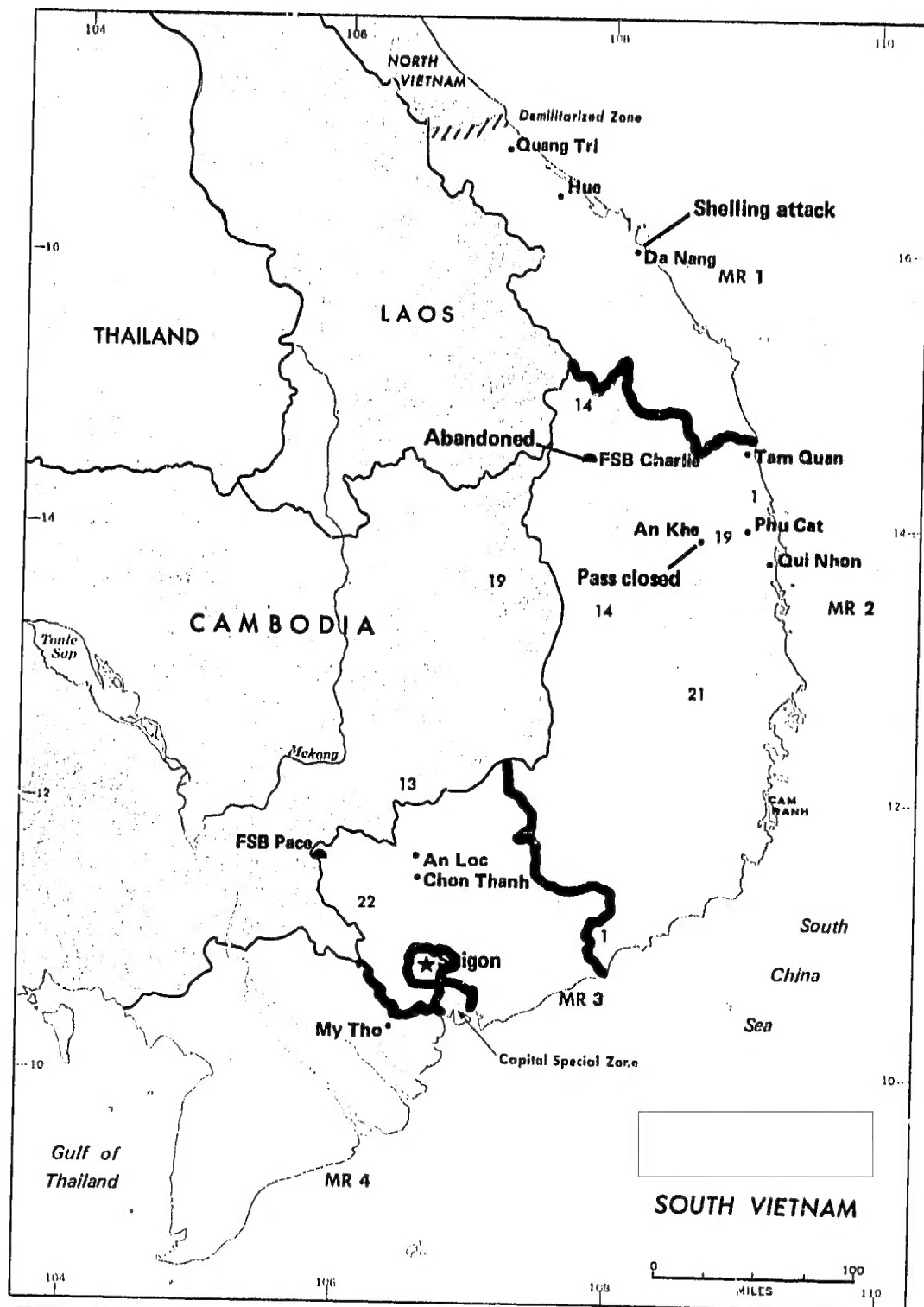
3. [redacted] anti-aircraft bursts as high as 8,000 feet have been observed near Chon Thanh suggesting that the Communists may be moving heavy AAA weapons closer to the town. Press reports that the Communists have encircled Chon Thanh cannot be

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confirmed, although the enemy continues to apply heavy pressure against government troops strung-out along Route 13 between Chon Thanh and An Loc.

4.  the Communists will soon strike in northern Tay Ninh Province. The attacks reportedly will be supported by tanks, and will have as their objective control of sections of Route 22 north of Tay Ninh City. In early April, a Viet Cong local force unit in the area was ordered by the provincial committee to stock enough supplies to last three months. To date, however, there has been no significant increase in enemy activity in northern Tay Ninh; the last major action took place on 2 April when the Communists overran Fire Support Base Lac Long.

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#### Sharp Fighting in the North

5. The North Vietnamese drive in Quang Tri is still stalled, but Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces have sharply stepped up attacks along the northern and central coast and enemy pressure is building in the central highlands.

6. During the past 24 hours the enemy has shelled Da Nang and a nearby airfield, causing some 40 civilian casualties and damaging or destroying about 20 helicopters. The Communists have also shelled nearly all of the principal towns in the past day or so in the three southern provinces of Military Region 2 and they have closed the major north-south highway, Route 1, in several places. A North Vietnamese regiment is currently attacking a district headquarters in Quang Tin Province and a Viet Cong unit reinforced by North Vietnamese troops mauled a government Regional Force battalion along the Quang Tin-Quang Ngai province border on 15 April.

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7. To the south, in Binh Dinh Province, the Communists attacked the district headquarters at Tam Quan, but at last report it was still in friendly hands. Regional and popular forces have taken heavy casualties in clashes with what are believed to be local Viet Cong units near the town of Phu Cat. In Khanh Hoa Province, a government patrol was ambushed and lost 17 killed on 15 April.

8. In the central highlands, fighting is continuing for control of Route 19, in the An Khe Pass area. The last convoy to try to get through the pass came under attack yesterday. About ten North Vietnamese companies are in the area. The commander of South Vietnamese forces in the highlands, General Dzu, has told an American source that the harassment in the pass is resulting in supply shortages in the heavily threatened Kontum area and he has had to order his forces there to conserve artillery ammunition.

### The Delta

9. [REDACTED] the enemy is planning to mount heavier attacks soon against major population centers in MR-4.

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[REDACTED] Viet Cong forces in Dinh Tuong Province would begin artillery and ground attacks on 15 April and that they would last for 10 days. Among the targets to be hit was the provincial capital at My Tho. [REDACTED] in Kien Phong Province claims that COSVN has ordered all VC cadre to go on a nationwide offensive by 15 April. The objective of the attacks, [REDACTED] is to obtain the "final victory" and force the US and South Vietnamese to accept a coalition government. The main targets in the delta will be Phong Dinh, Kien Hoa and Dinh Tuong; after these three provinces are captured, enemy units will allegedly then advance on Saigon.

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Thieu's Leadership

10. President Thieu is strongly emphasizing his personal role as commander-in-chief of the armed forces in the current military crisis. The government has also begun an ambitious propaganda campaign aimed at stiffening both popular and official resolve.

11. In the last several days Thieu has visited scenes of major action north of Saigon and in Kontum Province where he "thoroughly discussed operations now in progress." Unlike his visit to the northern Quang Tri front early this month, the latest trips have been given a great deal of play in the semi-official press. Government spokesmen have made it clear that Thieu is taking personal charge of the war effort.

12. Undoubtedly on instructions from the palace, the Ministry of Information has in the last several days energetically sponsored a campaign to celebrate government victories in the Quang Tri-Thua Thien area last week and several smaller battles. There have been many banners in Saigon and numerous accounts on the government radio and television stations.

13. There are also widespread stories that President Thieu has ordered that province capitals are to be defended at all costs. Prime Minister Khiem publicly ordered last week that no government officials are to leave their place of duty for any reason without authorization. He may have had in mind discouraging any repetition of the hasty retreat from Quang Tri made by many officials when that city came under enemy pressure earlier this month.

14. President Thieu's close identification with the war effort and the attempts by the government to promote public confidence make

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the present see-saw battle at An Loc, a provincial capital not far from Saigon, an important battle for psychological as well as military reasons.

Viet Cong Appeal for Support

15. The Viet Cong have issued their own version of Hanoi's 11 April appeal for more international support of their war effort. In a communique broadcast on 15 April, the chairman of the National Liberation Front called on the socialist bloc and other nations to "strongly support the Vietnamese people in their efforts to completely defeat the US aggressors." The Viet Cong document closely parallels Hanoi's communique, which was delivered directly to Soviet party leader Brezhnev and Chinese Premier Chou En-lai. The fact that the Vietnamese Communists are repeating their call for support suggests that they may not be happy with the initial Soviet and Chinese response, although it is also possible that Hanoi is secretly trying to squeeze more voltage out of the Soviet and Chinese propaganda mills.

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